

1978

# Working Together… Making It Work

Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

A DIFFERENT GAME

collaborating to serve youth at risk

# working together .... making it work

National Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration

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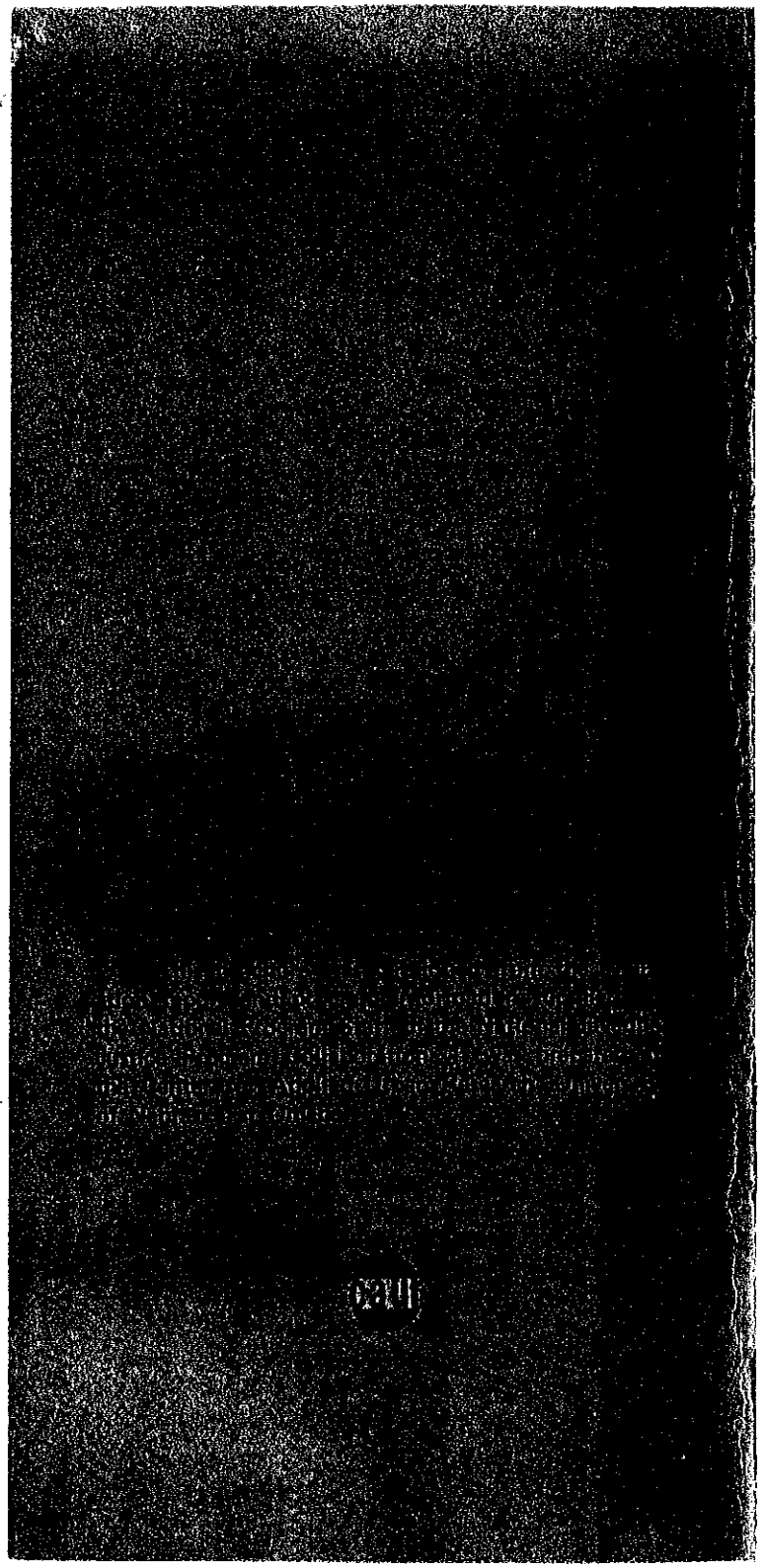

# WORKING TOGETHER. . .WORKS!

Experiences of the National Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration of The National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations, Inc.

## National Voluntary Agencies and Status Offenders: A Need and A Response.

In the early 1970's, a group made up of national non-profit youth-serving agencies and national advocacy organizations began to collaborate with each other and with members of Congress for passage of major legislation for juvenile justice. The intent of the agencies and the federal legislators was to strengthen the impetus for reform of the juvenile justice system and to increase the number and quality of alternatives to the juvenile justice system. After several near misses and compromises, the goal was achieved with the passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974.

A major component of the Act was the mandate to participating states to deinstitutionalize within two years those youth labeled "status offenders" by the juvenile courts. Status offenders are youth who have been referred to the juvenile courts for acts such as truancy, running away, breaking curfew, and incorrigibility. They are legally distinguished from youth who are referred to the courts for acts that violate the criminal codes and who are designated delinquent by the juvenile courts. Studies have shown that status offenders have had higher rates of incarceration than delinquents and frequently stay in state run institutions longer than delinquents. While in such institutions, the status offenders were mixed with delinquents and often

learned more "sophisticated" forms of anti-social and illegal behavior.

A tenet of the juvenile justice reform movement was the belief that status offenders often have serious social and family problems that cannot be treated in a correctional setting, thus status offenders should not be sent to such institutions. The inclusion in the Act of a mandate to deinstitutionalize status offenders was a victory for youth advocates and a hoped for advance in society's response to youth who experience major problems in the process of their development.

Having achieved the kind of legislation and mandated federal programs for which they had long advocated, several of the national youth-serving agencies realized that the hard task lay ahead- that of demonstrating the capability of the private youth-serving agencies to serve youth-in-trouble in the type of community based alternative programs called for in the Act. In response to this challenge, a group of 14 national youth-serving and advocacy agencies came together under the sponsorship of The National Assembly to form the Task Force on Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration. The overall intent of the Task Force was to initiate a process of collaboration at the national level for program development that would be transmitted to the agencies' local affiliates.

Soon after the Task Force was formed, the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention announced the first special emphasis funding program--that of developing programs and services for deinstitutionalized status offenders. The Task Force immediately began to consider this special emphasis program. It was agreed that the issue of providing alternative services for status offenders was a good one on which to focus the attention of the Task Force in implementing program collaboration. The decision was then made to submit a proposal.

In a process that, looking back, can only be described as remarkable, the Task Force, with the assistance of staff provided by The National Assembly, developed and wrote a proposal on which all of the agencies agreed and "signed-off." In the fall of 1975, the Task Force was awarded a grant by



the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to form five local juvenile justice collaborations that would work to increase the capacity of the national agencies and their local affiliates to serve status offenders.

The full impact of this collaboration among voluntary agencies will develop over many years and in many communities not originally in the pilot project. However, an evaluation of the first two years of the LEAA-supported National Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration project has already provided exciting confirmation of what many already knew--or hoped--was possible.

There have been two key learnings from the project already. The first is that collaboration works!

- Traditional agencies are reaching out to status offenders and other troubled youth whom they had never served or had underserved.
- New and expanded services have emerged, some by individual agencies, some cooperatively.
- Collaboration is contagious, extending far beyond the original group of national agencies and their affiliates in the five pilot communities.

The second key learning is that how organizations collaborate makes a difference. They have learned how to work together better.

- Different approaches and styles fit different collaborations: for needs assessment, for program planning, for advocacy, or for operation of direct services.
- Conflicts must be accepted as normal and necessary, and can be resolved constructively.
- Selection of representatives to the collaboration has profound effects upon the nature and success of the effort.
- The personal qualities and skills of the staff contribute to or retard collaboration.
- Objectives of the collaboration should be carefully chosen, particularly in the beginning.

# IT WORKS!

## You Can Put New Wine Into Old Wineskins!

Through the mutual support and stimulus of a collaborative concern, individual local agencies are reaching out to youth whom they had not served.

The YMCA at Spartanburg, South Carolina, has given 75 status offenders free youth memberships and, recognizing that these youth may feel uncomfortable or "different," added special permission for each of them to bring a friend with him or her free of charge to any and every activity. This latter made a big difference in real participation, as well as reaching out to additional youths in need.

In Tucson, Arizona, the Girl Scouts ran a successful summer employment program for status offenders as summer daycamp leaders, in cooperation with another youth agency. In addition to its direct success with youth and children, it also changed the board's attitudes toward this group, who turned out to be "just like regular kids." The secondary effect was to increase the number of status offenders in the "regular" Girl Scout program.

In Oakland, California, the Boy Scouts sponsored a career tutoring/work experience project for truants in cooperation with the Oakland Department of Parks and Recreation and a local junior high school, with apparently comparable direct and indirect results.

## More And Better By Working Together

For agencies like the Girls Clubs, which already have strong involvement with status offenders and other high risk youth, collaboration has contributed to new approaches and expanded service. In Waterbury, Connecticut, they developed a successful tutoring program to provide remedial help to status offender truants, in collaboration with the public schools, the public youth-serving agency, and community volunteers. In Tucson, Girls Clubs cooperated with non-traditional service agencies in developing a drop-in center for the parents of teenagers and parent education in addition to existing direct youth-services.



In Spokane, Washington, and Spartanburg, South Carolina, new case management and service coordination mechanisms were set up to provide better planning for and services to status offenders, drawing upon a wide range of voluntary and public services which were already available, but often fragmented and untapped in relation to youth with the greatest needs.

In several pilot communities, interagency staff development and in-service training programs increased the sensitivity and effectiveness of existing programs. In most cases, these training programs reached beyond the initial collaboration agency staffs to voluntary agency staff, volunteers, public school personnel, and workers in public programs serving juvenile offenders. In addition to the direct training, the cross exposure of staff also created the important by-product of increased mutual liking, respect, and cooperation among the public and voluntary agencies whom the trainees represented.

In Tucson, cooperation and joint planning was furthered still more by a comprehensive Youth Needs Assessment, funded jointly by a collaboration member, the Junior League, and the local collaboration. In addition the use of Junior League volunteers was instrumental in limiting the cost of the Assessment.

## Collaboration Is Contagious

Initiated as a cooperative venture of traditional non-profit service and volunteer organizations, the impact of collaboration has gone far beyond the originating group.

In Tucson, the collaboration quickly expanded from an original 15 agencies affiliated with the national agency sponsors, to more than 60, including public and quasi-public programs, "mainline" voluntary agencies, and non-traditional or "non-establishment" newer organizations. In the other project cities, similarly broad public-voluntary membership in the collaboration was the norm.

Cooperative projects resulting from the original voluntary sector initiative seem inevitably to develop in practice as public-voluntary collaborations.

Illustrations cited earlier involved public schools,

public juvenile correction services, public recreation programs, etc.

In Spokane, a recognition of the tension between youth-in-trouble and the police led to an exciting public voluntary pilot project. This involved a summer camp program for status offenders with deputy sheriffs as the counselors. The YMCA and Youth Alternatives provided the status offenders. The sheriff's office provided the police volunteers on released time. The Boy Scouts contributed the camp facilities and an Eagle Scout to help the deputies with camp-craft skills and activities. Together they succeeded in something none of them could have done alone.

Sometimes the successful innovative program, originating out of a voluntary initiative, becomes purely public in auspice. Financed by the local collaboration from their grant funds, the Spartanburg public school system developed a special program for truants within the school instead of merely banishing them with a regular suspension, which frequently had resulted in students dropping out of school entirely, repeating the violations, or both. The Spartanburg program involved a school teacher, a teacher's aide and volunteer tutors from several sources. The successful public school project succeeded in re-involving a majority of offenders, and in reducing the total number of subsequent offenders to a fraction of the pre-project number.

The contagion may extend beyond both public and voluntary agencies to the private business sector. A Tucson "New Careers" project for minority female offenders, developed by the YWCA, the Urban League, and New Directions for Young Women, enlisted the support of the local Building-Trades Council, the Home Builders Association, and other leading citizens in work/training projects involving skilled construction experiences in the beautification and improvement of local non-profit day care centers.

Finally, collaboration is contagious to non-pilot communities as well. For instance, a survey of local affiliates in the project evaluator's home city of Omaha, which was not part of the pilot project, turned up the fact that a majority of them had recently developed or expanded services to status offenders because of encouragement and support from their national offices.





## Successful Collaboration Is Not Automatic

Illustrations from among the many successful ventures growing out of inter-agency collaboration can be misleading without a note of sober caution. A number of opportunities were aborted or missed entirely because of poor collaboration process, and there was no shortage of tension and conflict in the pilot communities.

Collaboration is difficult. It is contrary to the vertical organization of most public and some voluntary services, to specialization, to traditional vested interests, and to the freedom associated with voluntarism, which traditionally permits dedicated persons to follow their own lodestars regardless of the interests and priorities of the wider community. Collaboration means committing staff and volunteer time, voluntarily curtailing some freedoms and prerogatives, and being supportive to organizations which are one's competitors for contributors' dollars and tax funds.

Collaboration also pays off, if carried out successfully, as this project has demonstrated. Programs and agencies are able to improve services, move out into creative new ventures, accomplish things which they could not do alone, or gain the courage and support to take risks which might be too dangerous for one agency alone. The guidelines and suggestions below are based on insights from both successes and mistakes encountered in the National Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration and its five local collaborations.

## Different Means For Different Scenes

The breadth and depth of participation in a collaboration, as well as the style with which it operates, depends in part upon its purpose. The same collaboration group may operate differently at different points in its development, or in relation to different activities. Below are four types of activity involved in the juvenile justice collaborations.

### Needs Assessment

Needs assessment should result in three related outcomes:

1. Getting the facts on needs, resources and gaps related to youth-services.
2. Involving and gaining the support of those who have the potential to fund, develop, or operate programs to meet the need, and/or the potential to be advocates for youth at risk.
3. Involving and gaining the acceptance of potential users of the services and their advocates so that the programs will be used when developed.

(Note: A simple, useful guide on needs assessment has been developed by Camp Fire Girls as part of their New Day program.)

Collaboration in needs assessment calls for the widest possible input and involvement of everyone with an actual or potential interest in youth at risk. (It also requires that someone be available to collate data.) Since the objectives are to obtain as much information as possible and to involve a mixed group of interested parties, the focus of this collaboration is pluralistic. People don't have to agree on everything. It is all right to come out with multiple needs and objectives. The hard decisions of setting priorities and rejecting some objectives come later.

One of the problems at this level of collaboration is to avoid dominance by any one person or group. The group should be structured to maximize equality of input, limiting the effects of aggressiveness, high status and power, and expertise, lest any of these shut out important insights. This can be done through a strong but open-minded chairperson or with the aid of such currently popular devices as Delbecq's Nominal Group Technique.

In summary, collaboration for needs assessment involves wide representation, with an open, permissive and pluralistic style. It is not a coincidence that the local demonstration which had the narrowest input on needs was also judged by the evaluation of the project to have had the least success in implementing its programs.

### Collaboration For Planning

Collaboration for planning is a tighter process. It must take into account existing vested interests, power, and resources, mix pragmatic considerations with the needs assessment, and come out with practical decisions which can be realistically carried out. At this point, the first restrictions on agencies which participate enters. While they are still not legally bound, they take on a moral obligation to accept the outcomes, at least to the extent of accepting divisions of "turf" and priorities for development, even if the development is done separately by the participants.

Thus, for the planning phase, the key decision makers on resources (funding bodies, agency administrators, board members, a few experts) as well as potential clients and their advocates must be involved directly or through genuine representatives. (See section on representation.) The direct collaboration should be limited to this group, but some mechanism for getting input from other interested parties should be included.

At this level of collaboration, conflict is inevitable and normal, and therefore, conflict resolution should be a major process. (See section on conflict.)

### Advocacy

Advocacy is typically oriented toward some kind of change and therefore inherently controversial to some degree. This leads to two insights.

First, a group which is too diverse cannot act on anything that is both significant and controversial. Advocacy requires a high degree of consensus on the issue (although diversity on all other unrelated matters is acceptable). Thus, "coalition," or limited alliance, is called for in collaboration for advocacy.

Second, a single agency or organization may not be effective. It may be too weak to achieve its goal alone, or the risk may be too high if the issue is controversial and the agency has a very broad base (as in Scouting or the Red Cross) or is dependent for significant financial support upon broad based funding sources such as the United Way or state and local government. Some form of alliance is necessary to spread the risk and avoid the single bolt of lightning upon the agency.

Advocacy must be selectively collaborative. It is frequently necessary to use ad hoc structures for advocacy when, as is usually the case, the total

membership of the broader collaboration lacks consensus. It was found that:

- National offices, as associations of many local affiliates, were often freer to do advocacy than their individual affiliates.
- Several collaborations did effective advocacy, reflecting high consensus on youth at risk issues.
- Advocacy leadership was especially strong from collaboration members which were not in the direct service business and therefore less vulnerable to financial pressures from the general community. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Association of Junior Leagues, and their local affiliates and individual leaders are examples.
- Local agencies were able to participate in advocacy through their national associations and their local collaborations even when they were shy about "going it alone."

Service Delivery

The delivery of direct services requires clear designation of the activity, simplicity of organization and administration, and efficiency of operation. These are not qualities normally associated with collaboration. Therefore, program collaborations, as opposed to broader planning, tend to work best in a smaller collaborative unit than the total group. Usually, one of three models is followed:

1. The collaboration plans jointly, with specific program implementations parceled out to individual agencies. Each agency does its own program, often with mutual consultation and supportiveness from the others. This was a common pattern in the Spartanburg and Connecticut demonstrations.

2. A small number of agencies develop a joint plan with the role and responsibility of each clearly defined, preferably in writing. Two programs illustrated this well.

In Oakland's alcohol-truancy program, the YMCA sponsored the program in its building and under its supervision, with the peer counseling provided by the Boy Scouts.



In Spokane, a plan for case management of referrals from the courts entailed four agencies taking turns being the sole recipient of referrals on a monthly rotating basis. Thus, the YWCA agreed to take responsibility for all youth referred in one month, drawing on and coordinating the services of all agencies for these youth, while the Salvation Army, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls continued, each in succeeding months. Thereafter, the Salvation Army took continuing responsibility for the program.

3. The collaboration sets up a joint program which, in effect, may become a new organization under multiple sponsorship. This pattern was followed by several programs in Tucson, Oakland, and Spokane. This model is often efficient when new funding is available and has some probability of continuing. Since it may be less integrated into the on-going program of the participating organizations than other models, it also tends to be more vulnerable in times of financial retrenchment.

For program effectiveness, each of these collaborative models has been demonstrated to work successfully. The most desirable structure depends upon the local circumstances of each individual program situation. It may be generalized, however, that whatever the model, the greater the direct responsibility of a participating organization, the greater will be the long term capacity building effect of the program upon that organization.

## Using Conflict Constructively

Conflict is inevitable in any collaboration of diverse organizations and individuals if the subject of the collaboration is important to the participants. Indeed, complete agreement usually means only that many of the participants don't really care.

Conflict is often painful. We often seek to avoid it. The project turned up at least four different avoidance mechanisms:

1. Scapegoating. Several collaborations tended to blame a common "enemy" (real, imagined, or created for the occasion) for differences among them which were real. Favorite scapegoats include major public agencies, the state legislature, the mayor and city council, "New York," "Washington," and "they."

2. Denial. One local collaboration tended to suppress its conflicts, resulting in a lowered level of mutual trust and openness, since the denied conflict still existed under the surface.

3. Ad hominem. In one collaboration, conflicts which were rooted in genuine issues tended to be treated as personal conflicts among participants.

4. Treating the symptom. One collaboration treated conflict as an upsetting issue in itself instead of addressing the real differences around which the conflict had developed.

None of these avoidances really worked. Each increased hostility and interfered with resolution of the problem.

Collaborations can prepare for conflict by acknowledging to each other that they will have differences, that the differences will be real and sincere at times, and by resolving to try to understand where the other side is coming from instead of reacting to the inevitable conflicts as simple moralistic issues or as personalized rejections. Such openness in relationship, with general liking and trust, permits members to disagree without risking their friendships.

Conflicts should be laid out on the table (or blackboard, as the case may be) as rationally as possible, with the assistance of the chairperson and/or staff. An open discussion of the pro's and con's may lead to one of the following resolutions (or a combination):

- rational persuasion of one side by the other (or part way by both),
- voluntary concession by the party to whom it is less important,
- compromise, where each side agrees to less than the best, or
- trade off, where making a concession on one issue wins one the other's concession on a second matter.

## Selecting Organizational Representatives

A key question is who should represent the organization at an inter-agency collaboration. First, three generally inappropriate representatives.



1. A representative who is marginal to the base organization. This situation maximizes loyalty, effort, and commitment to the collaboration, but its price is usually that the person does not truly represent his/her organization and has little influence "back home." However good the person may be, the organization is, for all intents and purposes not represented. Further, such a representative may use the collaboration to meet personal needs for idealism or ego gratification, without reference to what is realistic.

2. At the other extreme, total commitment to the base organization, so that all decisions are made solely in terms of their benefit or cost to the base organization alone, is clearly incompatible with collaboration. On a continuum, top executives tend to be fairly well onto this side of the scale because it is their express job to look out for the institutional interests of their agencies. Partially offsetting this role requirement is the frequency with which executive positions are filled by persons whose vision transcends their immediate situations. Overall, executives are essential to legitimize a collaboration and make major decisions, but are frequently not the ideal representative for the "nitty gritty" of collaboration activities, except in small agencies where the executive is the only upper level staff person.

3. Any person who uses criticism, disagreement, and put-downs as a means of promoting himself/herself at the expense of the group. (However, it should be noted that individuals who understand group roles can make outstanding contributions to collaboration efforts by being selectively critical.)

The best representatives seem to be high level persons other than the top executive who have primarily a program orientation, but who know clearly the reality limits of their organization's commitment to collaboration, and who have direct and easy access to the executive. This may be an "inner circle" board member or an upper level staff member.

The Evaluation has noted that this type of representation has correlated closely with the level of total agency effort in the National Collaboration. Of the eight most active national agencies, five had staff representatives who fit the description, two had

"inner circle" board representation, and one had a lower staff person with direct access to a deeply committed executive. Of the seven less active members, all had staff representatives who were not close to the seat of power or who were not program oriented.

In addition it may be desirable for the collaboration chairperson and a very small number of others to have their primary loyalty to the collaboration rather than to a participating organization. It is no coincidence that several of the local demonstrations got their start, or received help in coming out of a crisis, with leadership from Junior League and National Council of Jewish Women. Volunteer leaders were most free from institutional ties because their base organizations were broad volunteer bodies rather than direct service agencies.

Persons and organizations with the highest status and power outside the collaboration tended also to be dominant within the collaboration. On the other hand, where group members perceived each other as having similar status, there was high interaction, a cooperative atmosphere, and more conflict resolution through consensus.

The final insight, for which the evidence was less systematically observed, is that when two persons represented an organization, they tended to mutually support each other back home in the base organization and therefore to deliver stronger support to the collaboration.

## Staffing The Collaboration

The qualities which make for a successful staff person in a collaboration appear to be less related to the person's technical knowledge of the subject, (in this case youth at risk) than to certain personal qualities and interpersonal skills. Several factors appear from experience to be of particular relevance:

1. Primary loyalty to the collaboration rather than to any member. Usually, the person is not on temporary loan or looking forward to a career in one of the member organizations.

2. Affirmative attitudes toward the integrity and value of voluntary service organizations and toward volunteers. Actual experience with one or more of the participants or similar agencies, as staff or volunteer, is helpful, though not as important as the attitude.

3. Understanding of how voluntary organizations function.

4. Ego needs which are gratified by enabling things to happen, rather than by doing everything oneself. Staff who need center stage are sure to encounter major personal conflicts within the collaboration.

5. Understanding of the realities of interorganization relationships. Vested interests, institutional maintenance needs, competition, concern for public relations, and adherence to tradition need to be seen as normal and acceptable facts of life, not as sinful aberrations.

6. Interpersonal skills, sensitivity to human nuances, skill in group dynamics and supportive manner.

7. Capacity for well organized detail work. Correlating data, preparing agenda, planning and setting up meetings and other events, and follow through on decisions and actions are essential to collaboration.

8. A combination of disciplined objectivity on factual matters, even-handedness in personal relationships, and honestly expressed convictions in regard to human service.

9. Rational planning skills, an understanding of administration and budget and some expertise in the subject area of the collaboration. A staff member who lacks any of these should systematically seek to develop them on the job.

10. A knowledge of grants development and an understanding of how to work with government agencies.

## Making It Last

The several collaborations, national and local, began at different stages of readiness based upon prior history of collaboration or lack of it. Successful collaboration makes subsequent collaborations easier and more successful. Therefore,

- start with something which can succeed fairly well, fairly quickly, with satisfaction for all participants, and
- look beyond the immediate task to the relationships you must carry over to the future, since a continuing sense of ownership is necessary for continuing collaboration.

National Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration

*AFL-CIO, Department of Community Services
American Red Cross
Association of Junior Leagues
**Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
Boy Scouts of America
Boys' Clubs of America
Camp Fire Girls, Inc.
Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
Girls Clubs of America, Inc.
JWB (Jewish Welfare Board)
*National Conference of Catholic Charities
National Council for Homemaker-Home Health Aide Services, Inc.
National Council of Jewish Women
*National Council of Negro Women, Inc.
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers
**National Network of Runaway and Youth Services
*National Urban League, Inc.
The Salvation Army
Travelers Aid Association of America
National Board, Y.W.C.A. of the U.S.A.
National Council, Y.M.C.A. of the U.S.A.
*United States Catholic Conference

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**As of August, 1978



For referrals, resource materials and audio-visual aids, contact:

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## MATERIALS AVAILABLE

A. Descriptive Project Flyer "A Different Game."

B. Project Report – "A Reasonable Alternative – Community Based Service for Status Offenders Through Voluntary Agency Collaboration."

C. Evaluation/Substantive Summary – "Working Together. . .Making It Work" (this brochure).

D. Evaluation Report – "Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration–Evaluation Report" and separate volume of appendices.

E. Program Models – A set of 20 models developed for replication.

F. Slide – Cassette Presentation – "A Different Game."

G. Guide – "How To Play A Different Game."

H. (Quarterly) Bulletin.